

REVISED CRITERIA FOR CONSULTING SEEDA ON STRATEGIC PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Purpose

SEEDA has been a statutory consultee on planning applications of regional economic significance since June 2004. SEEDA decides what types of planning applications are 'regionally strategic' to meet our business needs. At present Local Planning Authorities are required to consult the Agency in accordance with the Notification Criteria that were approved by the SEEDA Board in March 2007.

The Planning Team has considered the extent to which current arrangements add value. Whilst there are a number of areas where we are adding significant value there are some types of application where the value we are adding is questionable (Annex 1). In light of SEEDA's refined focus and priorities we are seeking the Board's approval of the revised planning application criteria (Annex 2).

Recommendation

The Board is invited to **AGREE** the revised criteria for planning applications of regional economic significance as set out in Annex 2 which will significantly reduce the number of statutory planning applications received by the Agency from a peak of 106 (2007-2008) to approximately 45 per annum.

Reputational implications

The revised criteria will maintain SEEDA's ability to provide an economic development view on planning applications that local authorities and other statutory consultees often object to. Annex 2 details five case studies where SEEDA has added value by assisting developers obtain planning permission for schemes. The economic significance of the case studies is highlighted by the fact that together they will generate in excess of 10,400 jobs once fully built and occupied.

Timescale & Justification for recommendation

Subject to agreement by the Board, all local authorities within the region will be notified of the revised criteria through the update of our Advice Note by the end of November.

The revised criteria will enable SEEDA's restructured Planning Team to continue adding value through the statutory consultee role whilst freeing up capacity to develop the Single Regional Strategy.

Author

[REDACTED]

Signed off-by

Paul Lovejoy, Executive Director (Strategy and Communications), 23 October 2009

Annex 1 – Value Added Through Statutory Consultations Report (Extract)

3. Planning Applications

This report will identify areas where we have added value through the planning process using a range of case studies and also identify areas where we consider the value added is negligible.

3.2 Added Value Case Studies

Slough Trading Estate:

- SEEDA was asked to comment on the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Opinion by Slough Borough Council. In light of the significant levels of floorspace proposed, and the skills issues in the Area, we suggested that a Skills Analysis report was completed as a subsequent document in support of the application.
- The developers submitted an outline application accompanied by a skills analysis document and as part of the scheme the developers proposed incorporating a skills and training centre in partnership with a local Further Education college.
- SEEDA supported the development which received opposition from the local authority and a range of other stakeholders.
- Slough approved the application (in principle) subject to the signing of a legal agreement and confirmation that the application will not be called in by the Government Office.
- The development will result in a net increase of approximately **4,100 jobs** at the Slough Trading Estate.
- **Value Added:** RES Target 6 (Skills) and Target 9 (employment floorspace).

Thanet - China Gateway (Manston Airport)

- SEEDA supported the development to deliver Phase 1 of a large scale strategic Business Park adjacent to Manston Airport that would create up to **1,500 jobs** in the South East's most disadvantaged local authority area.
- The Officers Report emphasised the letter of support received from SEEDA.
- The scheme was approved by Thanet District Council.
- **Value Added:** Target 6 (skills), Target 9 (employment floorspace), Target 11 (Climate Change) plus overarching principle of Sustainable Economic Development.

Aylesbury Vale - Winslow Green

- Mixed use development to provide a sustainable development to Winslow: 3300 dwellings and 68,000m² of business space, community facilities, new transport infrastructure and green space.
- The development would create in excess of **3000 jobs** once constructed and fully occupied.
- SEEDA broadly supported the application against opposition from local residents, councillors and other public sector Agencies (including Aylesbury Advantage). We specifically welcomed the sustainability of the scheme and the proposal to provide a new railway station / transport interchange that would enable the residents of the new and existing developments to access East – West Rail.
- The application was approved by Aylesbury Vale.
- **Value Added:** Target 9 (employment floorspace), Target 11 (Climate Change) plus overarching principle of Sustainable Economic Development.

Hart District Council – Pyestock

- SEEDA supported the development to provide 140,000m² of warehousing and distribution floorspace on 47.5ha at the former Defence Evaluation and Research Agency facility.
- The development would generate **up to 1800 jobs** and the applicants have proposed providing local job recruitment and training.
- The development was strongly opposed by local residents, councillors and planning committee members.
- The application was subsequently refused by Hart District Council
- The Applicants appealed and the application was subsequently approved by the Secretary of State.
- **Value Added:** Target 6 (skills), Target 9 (employment floorspace), plus overarching principle of Sustainable Economic Development.

Woking Borough Council - McLaren Technology Centre (Expansion)

- SEEDA supported the development to build a purpose built 38,000m² single storey extension.
- The development would require the release of some greenbelt land, although we considered that the 'very special circumstances' put forward by the applicants were justified.
- The development would generate an **additional 510 jobs** at the Technology Centre.
- The application was subsequently approved by Woking District Council.
- **Value Added:** Global Competitiveness Headline Objective, Target 9 (employment floorspace) and overarching principle of Sustainable Economic Development.

3.2 Limited Added Value

100% residential schemes (up to 2,500 dwellings)

- Sites often allocated in local planning policy documents.
- Developments often comply with the appropriate Code for Sustainable Homes standard and tend to incorporate low carbon energy generation (such as combined heat and power).
- Responses rarely mentioned in Planning Committee Reports.

Applications for Health facilities (including hospitals)

- Limited number of consultations.
- Generally a standard response.

Minerals Applications:

- We use a relatively brief standard response (template) which very rarely influences the decision of the Planning Committee.

Waste

- Only scope for adding any value is applications for new facilities, however, we often utilise a standard approach identifying the RES Target to maximise the value of waste.

Annex 2 – Revised Planning Application Criteria

Local Authorities are required to consult with SEEDA on development proposals of regional or sub-regional economic significance or proposals that contribute towards the objectives set within the Regional Economic Strategy.

A. Developments of regional or sub-regional significance due to the scale of the proposal, that is, applications for:

1. Residential development comprising **2500** units or more
2. Retail development **20,000sqm** or more (net additional gross floorspace)
3. Employment development on sites of 10ha+ or comprising **10,000sqm** or more (net additional gross floorspace),
4. Tourism/leisure development comprising **20,000sqm** or more (net additional gross floorspace); or any other proposals likely to attract over 250,000 visitors per annum¹
5. Mixed use development on sites of 10ha+ or comprising **20,000sqm** or more (net additional gross floorspace) containing a component that meets the thresholds for residential, retail, employment or leisure development as set out in (1) – (4) above, or
6. Further / Higher Educational Establishments comprising **10,000sqm** or more (net additional gross floorspace).

B. Applications for the provision of strategic transport infrastructure or the improvement of the Region's existing strategic infrastructure which meet the following criteria: This list of schemes will help deliver Actions 4 and 8 of the RES in particular the need to invest in strategic economic corridors.

1. Applications relating to regionally significant highway improvements with a total cost in excess of £5m on the following corridors (including junction improvements) within the South East regional boundary, namely:
 - a. Schemes of national significance, relating to:
 - the M1, M3, M4, M20, M23, M25 and M40
 - b. Schemes of regional significance, relating to:
 - the M2, M27, M271, and M275
 - the A2, A20, A21, A23, A26, A27, A3, A31, A34, A36, A249, A259, A303, A308(M), A43, A404, A404(M), A5, and A2070
 - c. Any other road scheme identified in Annex 2 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan².
2. Applications relating to highway improvements of sub-regional significance with a total cost in excess of £5m³, as identified in Annex 3 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan⁴.

¹ As set out in South East Plan (May 2009) Policy TSR4.

² Delivering the South East Plan: The South East Plan Implementation Plan October 2006 – Annex 2: National, Inter-regional and regionally significant infrastructure

3. Applications relating to improvements in the network of public transport services that are of regional significance⁵, including those identified in Annex 2 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan.
4. Applications for the provision of other transport infrastructure projects of the types listed below:
 - a. Airports
 - Construction of airports with a basic runway length in excess of 1,000m
 - Construction of a new runway at existing airports in excess of 1,000m
 - Construction of an extension to an existing runway by more than 100m
 - Construction of a new airport terminal, or the expansions of an existing terminal, which provides additional capacity.
 - Development falling outside of the above criteria that the local authority considers to be regionally significant.
 - b. Ports
 - Construction of facilities that increase or threaten to decrease the capacity of the ports identified as gateways in Policy T10 of the [South East Plan](#), specifically the ports of Southampton, Portsmouth, Dover, Thamesport and Sheerness;
 - Construction of facilities that increase or threaten to decrease the capacity of regionally significant ports identified in Policy T10 of the [South East Plan](#), specifically Shoreham, Newhaven and Ramsgate;
 - Construction of a new port.
 - Development falling outside of the above criteria that the local authority considers to be regionally significant.
 - c. Inter-modal Interchanges
 - Terminals of over 10ha for the transfer of freight from road to rail.
 - d. Wharves and associated rail depots
 - Any proposals for new wharves and associated rail depots;
 - Any proposals that threaten the loss of wharves and associated rail depots.

C. Energy, including renewable energy developments

- a. Schemes of over 5MW installed capacity.

D. Other major applications that, whilst they do not fall within the criteria set out above, the local planning authority considers may have a significant regional economic impact, such as, the loss of a strategic employment site to other uses.

³ Using the Local Transport Plan definition of a major transport scheme. If project cost is unknown, the local planning authority will need to use its discretion in consulting SEEDA. However in cases of uncertainty they may wish to contact SEEDA to ascertain if it wishes to be consulted

⁴ The South East Plan Implementation Plan October 2006 – Annex 3: Sub-regional Investment Frameworks

⁵ Where a proposal does not appear in Annex 2 of the South East Plan Implementation Plan, local planning authorities should use their discretion in consulting SEEDA. In cases of uncertainty, the local planning authority should contact SEEDA to ascertain if it wishes to be consulted.